

# **HISTORY, PURPOSES AND POLICIES**

**WITH REGARD TO THE ACT**

## **“TO PROMOTE THE EDUCATION OF THE BLIND”**



**American Printing House for the Blind**

*Chartered 1858*

**Louisville, Kentucky**

**1948**







AMERICAN PRINTING HOUSE FOR THE BLIND

1839 Frankfort Avenue

Louisville 6, Kentucky

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# HISTORY, PURPOSES, AND POLICIES OF THE AMERICAN PRINTING HOUSE FOR THE BLIND WITH REGARD TO THE ACT "TO PROMOTE THE EDUCATION OF THE BLIND"

As the official schoolbook printery for the United States and its territories, the primary work of the American Printing House for the Blind is the extension of its services to the schools and classes for the blind through the Federal Act "To Promote the Education of the Blind." This Act, originally passed in 1879, is designed to furnish to the Printing House the funds to provide the free school texts, tangible apparatus, and other supplementary materials necessary in the education of the pupils under instruction in the schools and classes for the blind throughout the country.

The American Printing House for the Blind was originally chartered by the Commonwealth of Kentucky on January 23, 1858, as a national, non-profit institution designed to manufacture and provide at cost embossed books and tangible apparatus for the blind. In 1842, Kentucky established the third state school for the blind, but soon found a great need for embossed books and educational devices for instructional purposes. Actually, the Printing House had its beginning as a small printshop in the basement of the Kentucky School. Because other schools and institutions also needed books, etc., the Board of Trustees of the Kentucky School saw the wisdom of founding a national, non-profit printing house which could meet the combined demands of all the schools and institutions for these materials. As a result, the Printing House was chartered for this purpose, with the members of the Board of the Kentucky School for the Blind serving as the seven original incorporators of the institution.

For twenty years after its incorporation, the Printing House supplied its materials on a cash basis and through funds raised in several of the states. The exigencies of the Civil War demonstrated the need for a more adequate—and permanent—source of funds for books and instructional materials for all of the schools, and in 1878 the American Association of Instructors of the Blind memorialized Congress for an appropriation for this purpose. As a result, in 1879, Congress passed the Act "To Promote the Education of the Blind." The original Federal

appropriation, which was authorized in perpetuity, amounted to \$10,000 annually. Subsequently, as the blind school population increased, and new methods of education required greater and more diversified materials, the appropriation was increased from time to time until it now totals \$125,000 annually, including the \$10,000 permanent appropriation.

*Management*—In setting up the Federal appropriation, Congress required that the superintendents of the schools for the blind in the several states and territories of the United States be made ex-Officio Trustees of the Printing House, to act as agents of the Federal Government in the management of the affairs of the institution. The Board of Trustees of the Printing House, therefore, is comprised of seven citizens of Louisville, Kentucky (successors in office to the original incorporators) and ex-Officio all of the superintendents, or corresponding salaried executive heads, of the schools and classes for the blind throughout the country. In this connection, it has been ruled that, in the case of public school classes, the Superintendent of Public Schools rather than the Supervisor of the Classes for the Blind is the Trustee of the Printing House. All Trustees serve without compensation and must pay their own expenses even when attending meetings. The local Board of seven members constitutes an Executive Committee which acts for the whole Board in the interim between Annual Meetings.

The officers of the institution consist of a President (elected from the local Board members), a Vice-President (elected from the ex-Officio Trustees), a Treasurer (traditionally a bank in Louisville, Kentucky), and a Secretary. These officers are elected annually. A Superintendent, elected every two years, acts as the paid executive to manage the Printing House under the direction of the Board of Trustees. It is interesting to note that all six Superintendents of the institution during its ninety years of existence have come from the ranks of the superintendents of the schools for the blind.

Both the state and Federal Charters require that each year recommendations be requested from the several states, particularly from the schools and classes for the blind under the Federal authorization, for books and materials to be manufactured and made available through the Printing House. A Publications Committee was therefore set up to administer this part of the work. At the present time this Committee consists of five Trus-



tees, selected from the ex-Officio members, who are elected biennially. From the recommendations received, the Publications Committee is required to select for production those books, etc., for which there is the greatest demand. Further, the Committee can make recommendations and suggestions as to the manner and style in which books are produced, conduct surveys of the need for special devices, etc., and otherwise work closely with the Superintendent of the Printing House in making available to the schools the materials which they need for the education of the blind students under their care. Of course, all policies of the institution must be approved by the whole Board of Trustees.

*Administration of the Federal Funds*—The Federal Act requires that, on the first Monday in January of each year, the Superintendent of the Printing House shall obtain from the superintendents of the schools and classes for the blind a registration of the number of pupils they *have enrolled and under formal instruction with materials provided by the Printing House on that date*. These enrollments are used to determine the per capita quota allotments for the following fiscal year (July 1-June 30) to the individual schools and classes. These quota allocations do not consist of cash payments to the schools for the blind, but are in the form of credits on the books of the Printing House which must be used in the purchase of books, tangible apparatus and other materials which are “manufactured at” the American Printing House for the Blind. The actual Federal monies themselves are paid over semi-annually to the Treasurer of the institution and, by law, are used for the purchase of raw materials and the payment of salaries for the manufacture of books and apparatus to the order of the schools and classes. It is not possible for the Printing House to purchase supplies, such as paper, furniture, etc., and then reissue them to the schools and classes on quota allotments without first processing them to a very considerable degree.

The quota allocations to the individual schools and classes are made on July 1st of each year and cover the allotments for the entire fiscal year July 1-June 30. It is against these credit allocations that the schools authorize the shipment of books and materials to their respective schools. However, at the same time when registration of enrollments are taken early in January of each year, the superintendents of the schools and classes are asked to certify the receipt of the credit for the year, although

they may not as yet have ordered, or received, materials for the full amount. These signed forms are submitted to the United States Government for the audit of the \$125,000 appropriation. As a courtesy to the schools, the Printing House itself carries credits or overdrafts (the latter not to exceed 50 per cent of the next year's anticipated quota allotment of a particular school) on its books, so that the schools may have more flexible use of the credit allocations to fit the needs of their individual school programs. Cash payments by the schools are also accepted.

Books and other embossed materials for school use are selected in either one of two ways:

1. As noted on page 2 above, it is the duty of the Publications Committee to ask for recommendations from the schools and classes and to select therefrom the books and materials to be manufactured and advertised in the General Catalogs of the Printing House. The actual procedure in this case is as follows:

- a. The Chairman of the Publications Committee sends out at least once a year a request to all of the superintendents for recommendations for books to be published. In addition, it is possible for superintendents to make recommendations at any time they see fit. When a superintendent and his staff of teachers anticipate the need of a new text or series, they should make definite recommendations based upon a thorough study of texts available. Texts so recommended should be chosen with a view to meeting the probable needs of the greatest number of schools.

- b. All books recommended are classified and graded and compiled into lists which are examined and evaluated by the Publications Committee. These lists are then sent to the schools for Tentative Orders, i.e., each superintendent is asked to advise the Printing House how many copies of each title on the list his school would eventually order if the book were made available on quota accounts.

- c. All tentative orders are then compiled, and those titles are put in line for publication which meet the following specifications:

*Braille Books*—Orders must be received from not less than five schools for a total of at least 20 copies.

*Braille Music*—Orders must be received for a total of at least 5 copies.

2. The superintendent of any school or class for the blind can authorize the Superintendent of the Printing House to publish any desired title and supply as few or as many copies as the particular school may want, provided the entire cost of the Braille plates (or Talking Book masters), as well as of all copies provided to the individual school, is charged to that school's quota account or is paid for in cash by said school. Such books can also be advertised to the other schools and classes and be purchased by them at simply the printing and binding costs, since the original plate-making is already paid for. This makes possible the publication on quota accounts of books of considerable usefulness to particular schools but which are too local in character to meet the requirements of general materials published under the authorization of the Publications Committee.

In addition to initiating the publication of books and magazines of educational value, it is also possible for the schools and classes to purchase, at the price of printing and binding costs only (so-called "reprint price"), any title listed in the Printing House catalogs for which the Braille plates or Talking Book masters have been paid for by any individual or agency other than the schools for the blind, such as the Library of Congress.

The use of the Talking Book as an educational medium is as yet considered to still be in the experimental stage. Several supplementary books have been made available in Talking Book form, but, in the main, the schools up to now have had available to them in recorded form only reprints of such titles as the Printing House has recorded for other agencies and has advertised in its General Catalogs.

Ink-print desk copies, edited to conform with Braille texts, for the use of sighted teachers can also be supplied on quota accounts. Upon direct order from the schools, the ink-print books will be purchased from the publishers and "edited" to show Braille pagings, necessary changes in copy, omissions, etc. Unedited ink-print copies can be furnished only for cash payments.

The manufacture of tangible apparatus is an old but, up to the present, very limited service which the Printing House can provide to the schools and classes. For many years, Braille



slates, Braillewriters, topographical maps, arithmetic slates, writing cards, etc., have been available. However, the opportunities for expansion in this field are great, and much emphasis should be placed on this department in the future.

A ruling by the Legal Department of the Federal Security Agency, under which the Act "To Promote the Education of the Blind" is administered, and an amendment to the State Charter of the institution, has made it possible for the Printing House to manufacture and supply books in large print. A survey has shown that there are many children who are "legally blind", but who would benefit from the use of large print books rather than being forced to be educated through Braille. This department is just getting under way, but large type materials will be available to the schools and classes on quota account within a very few months. In addition, it will be possible for the sight-saving classes in the public schools to purchase for cash, at cost, such copies of books and other materials which are published in this form as they may desire. Further, as the department grows and expands, and facilities are available, it will be possible to publish large type books to the order of individual schools and other agencies as may be interested in such materials.

In conclusion, perhaps the most important point which the superintendents of the schools and classes should realize is that the American Printing House for the Blind is simply acting as the agent of, or the channel through which, the Federal Government is giving aid to the several states for the purposes of promoting the free public educational system of our country. The Printing House can manufacture and provide to the schools only those materials which they direct and authorize be supplied, and is guided entirely by the wishes of the superintendents of the schools and classes, as ex-Officio Trustees of the American Printing House for the Blind, in the administration of the Act "To Promote the Education of the Blind." However, it must not be forgotten that the Printing House is also a "national, non-profit agency for the blind," and as such can offer its facilities to any other such agency which wishes to have us do its manufacturing. Books and materials are supplied under contract and are manufactured in accordance with such specifications as may be required by the contracting agency. The overall result is to provide a larger basis of operation, thereby reducing costs of production to everyone.







